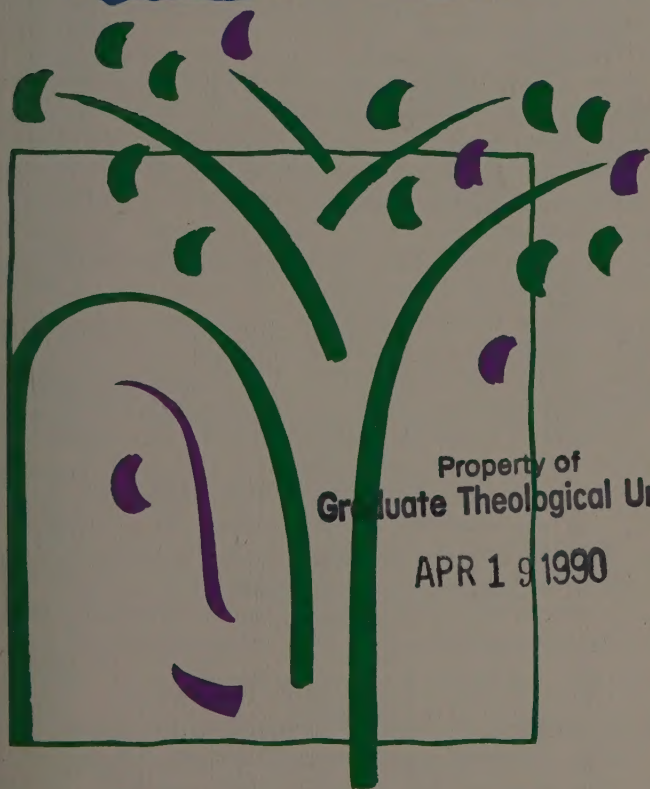


LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

MAY
1990



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CELEBRATE GOD'S CREATION

For Growth in Faith and Mission

CELEBRATE GOD'S CREATION

"Celebrate God's Creation." Those are the words and thoughts that will bring hundreds upon hundreds of us to Anaheim this July to join in a "group hug" of God's good earth. And those of us who can't be in Anaheim will also have countless opportunities in our lives to put our arms around God's fair earth and honor it as the good creation God pronounced it to be in Genesis 1.

Celebrate—how much there is in that one little word! "To perform a sacred or solemn ceremony publicly and with appropriate rites," the dictionary says of it. "To honor, hallow, applaud, commemorate, mark, observe, rejoice over," says the thesaurus. What say you, woman of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as you meditate on the phrase, "Celebrate God's Creation," and drink in the convention logo on the front cover of this issue? Where do you fit in the celebration? Do you

plant a tree to say yes to God's good earth? Do you say no to plastic food and plastic shopping bags as you say yes to a sustainable environment? Do you work for laws and ordinances to protect recreation areas and animals? Do you do your part to build community and peace—in your family, community, the world? Do you study the Word in earnest to discover God's will? Do you pray daily for God's will to be done on earth—surely a will that involves keeping creation fresh and green and clean and whole.

As each of us seeks to discover and live out the ways in which we celebrate God's creation, let us remember that we have—in our person—the very breath of the Creator of the world. We as human beings are part of the creation that our God has declared "very good." May we lend hands with the rest of that same creation to honor God's handiwork.

ON THE FRONT COVER: "Celebrate God's Creation," the logo and theme for the First Triennial Convention of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Encourage the child in your life to "celebrate God's creation" by photocopying the cover of this issue and using it as a coloring activity.

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IT'S A GLOBAL VILLAGE, AFTER ALL

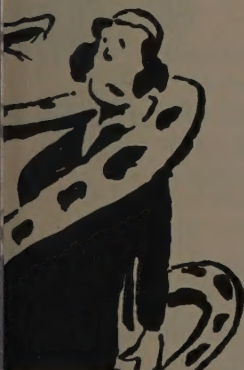
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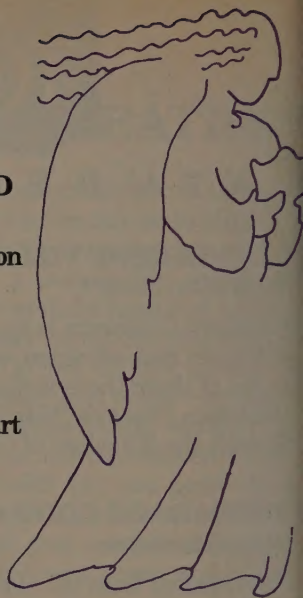
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t's a Global Village, After All

h Ellen
vert

"It's a Small World," one of the attractions at Disneyland, describes the world as a place of laughter and tears, a place of hope and fears.

Those words remind us how small our world is. Yet when Walt Disney constructed the attraction for the UNICEF display at the 1964 New York World's Fair, it *wasn't* a small world. It was, rather, the height of the cold war, and that summer three civil-rights workers were slain in Mississippi.

The attraction opened at Disneyland in 1967, just a year after Black teenagers rioted in Watts, less than 20 miles away. It was also the year of the six-day Arab-Israeli war, of race riots in Detroit, Spanish Harlem and Birmingham; and the year Communist China exploded its first hydrogen bomb.

In the Southern California theme park, built in the middle of prosperous Orange County, none of those problems seemed to exist. In 1967 Southern California was still the land where dreams came true—and the Lutheran church was growing wildly there.

That was almost 25 years ago, and the world has become much smaller since then. Today most everything in Southern California can be found in most areas of North America, but in California everything is bigger, more frequent, more dramatic and—most of all—more out in the open. It is a place where dreams come true, and where dreams are dashed.

The educated and motivated professional person finds Southern California a place where creativity, imagination and ingenuity can flourish; yet many people starting out in middle management and service professions know they

may never be able to buy a house. Today, less than 20 percent of the people in the five-county metropolitan Los Angeles area can afford a median-priced home. It is not unusual for people to buy homes that are located 90 minutes from their workplaces, just to get housing they can afford. Historically these are the people who have been members of Lutheran congregations in our country.

Southern California is filled with contrasts and extremes. The prevailing wonderful weather and the seemingly unimaginable wealth of some residents allows them to be out playing constantly, in activities created for just such a climate and wealth. The mild weather also makes it possible for more and more homeless people to survive living on the streets.

For some refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Central America, Southern California has been the place to begin life anew. Such refugees are presented with opportunities to earn more money in a year than they would have earned in a lifetime in the countries they fled. Yet many refugees struggle with such problems as a seemingly unending cycle of poverty, separation from their families, isolation because of language barriers and an inability to improve their immigration status.

Such contrasts pose an exciting challenge for the church. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations that were built by descendants of northern European Lutherans find themselves located in the middle of Asian and Hispanic communities. Once-busy parishes now rent out large portions of their facilities.

"Blended families," single adults of all ages (with and without children) and elderly people make up most of the parish family units. Acolyte schedules have to be planned according to the children's visits with non-custodial parents. Adults come to new member classes with no basic knowledge of Scripture.

Still, the gospel of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed, embodied, and lived out. Faithful Lutherans from all walks of life, representing every cultural background, rise to the challenges of change. Even so, the balance between being rooted in the foundations of the Lutheran tradition and being able to speak to the prevailing culture is a tenuous one.

Sunday mornings in Southern California, Lutherans worship in English, Finnish and Danish, as they have for

**It's a
Global
Village**

**Southern
California is filled
with contrasts and
extremes.**

100 years. However, in the last 10 years, we have established weekly worship in Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Mandarin, Cantonese and Chinese.

There is no "typical" congregation in this area of diversity. In some parishes, people's lives appear perfect. There are Mercedes Benzes, BMWs and Jaguars in church parking lots. Not far away, entire social ministry budgets go to help indigent people who come to the church office on a regular basis. The youth ministry of some Los Angeles congregations consists of gang prevention and intervention, while in other congregations annual winter ski trips are the norm for youth.

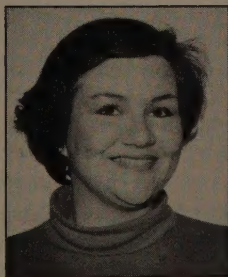
The Magic Kingdom exists within the walls of Disneyland. The Kingdom of God has no walls. Being the church in this wonderful place is about having the vision to see God's presence in everything, and refusing to accept lines that would artificially separate sacred and secular.

It could be easy to look at the Los Angeles area and see only congestion, smog, poverty, greed and self-interest. But more powerful is the breathtaking physical beauty of the land, the resilience of the human spirit and the faithfulness of the body of Christ. It could be easy to get put off by language and cultural differences, but more powerful and thrilling is the sight of children learning in multicultural classrooms and having daily "small world" village experiences.

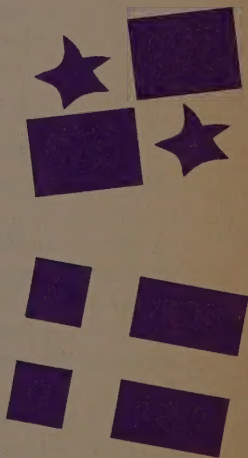
It is a world of laughter and tears, hopes and fears; it is a much smaller world than it was in 1964. And what really makes it a small world, after all, is the cross of Jesus the Christ. ■

the Rev. Ruth Ellen Sievert, Modesto, California, who also wrote "To Plant a Tree" responsive reading (p. 18), is pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Baldwin Park, California, and a Ph.D. student in pastoral theology at the School of Theology at Claremont, California.

What really makes it a small world, after all, is the cross of Jesus the Christ



It's a Global Village...



Threads of God's Creation



The threads of a created universe and created human beings weave the fabric of their relationship throughout the four-session study, *Threads of God's Creation*, written for the 1990 Women of the ELCA First Triennial Convention.

Through processes the study of "word, wisdom, and witness," biblical commentary, theological commentary, and witness experience are used to explore the text from Genesis.

Steve Charleston, writer of the study, is an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Minnesota and rector for cross-cultural studies at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary. He is a citizen of the Choctaw nation of Oklahoma, and the main Bible study presenter for the First Triennial Convention, July 12-15 in Anaheim, California.

The following excerpt (minus the study questions) is from the second session of the study, "Thread of Love." It takes up the challenge of "isolated creation."

Threads of God's Creation will be available for purchase in 1990 from Augsburg Fortress: study book, code 2-9028, \$2.25; leader guide, code 2-9028, \$2.75.

The Thread of Love

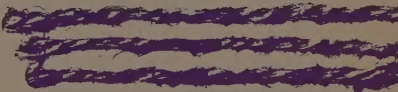
Steve Charleston

(Study Text: Genesis 2:15-25)

God of all Creation, help us to see the world around us as our home. We sometimes feel isolated and alone, call us by name, take us by the hand, and lead us to your love. Give us the vision to see creation as a garden, not a wilderness. Amen.

Word: Biblical Comment

When we read Genesis 2:15-25, there are three helpful things to bear in mind. First, the story of the garden is one of the oldest creation stories known to humanity. It is likely that versions of the Garden of Eden story have existed for thousands of years, especially in the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia. What we see in Genesis, therefore, is a timeless creation epic that the people of early Israel took and shaped for their own. Secondly, we need to be aware that in ancient times a name was a source of tremendous spiritual power. The name, the *soul* of a person or thing, was contained in its name. The name of the garden itself, Eden, which means *delight*, would have been an important clue to the very nature of the garden. The naming of the animals and the first human being would have been an ancient way of indicating the spiritual relationship between humanity and the natural world. To name something was to have spiritual power over it. To exchange names was to enter into a spiritual relationship. Finally, we must remember that the kinds of relationships we see in




Genesis 2 are covenant relationships. They are matters of kinship. Ancient people understood themselves as living in a network of relationships, in extended family. Kinship meant respect, responsibility, obligation, honor, and love. It was a way of life.

The Wisdom: A Theological Comment

... God did not create a wilderness. God created a garden. The earth is our home: a beautiful, mysterious, delightful garden home. We are not strangers to this place, meant to enter it in fear and suspicion, but living members of the garden. We are part of it. We belong in it. We are related to it. It was made for us by a loving God. And there is the key idea: the very beginning of all creation, the genesis of Genesis itself, was love. Love is the thread of relationship that brought the garden into being. God's love for humanity. God's love for creation.

As Christians, we can describe the thread of love which draws all of creation home to the garden in a single word: *kinship*. God did not create humanity to live in isolation. It is not good to live alone: the will of God toward relationship, toward kinship



and love, is the clear expression of the parent-God of Genesis 2. God creates the animals of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea to live in relation to humanity. The ancient naming ceremony of Gen-

**To exchange names
was to enter into
a spiritual
relationship,
into a covenant
relationship.**

Genesis 2 establishes that relationship. It bonds life together in kinship. In the same way, human beings themselves, male and female, are bonded into a sacred kinship. The whole of creation is our home, for we are all members of God's extended family. . . .

Over the many centuries that [the Genesis] story has existed, it has been used to turn the garden into a wilderness. It has been used to justify human exploitation of the natural world. It has been used by men to justify their oppression of women. The naked abuse of power by patriarchal interpretations of Genesis 2 is a shame: a public shame and a Christian shame. And as long as we continue to promote the distorted relationships of human dominance

over nature, or male dominance over women, we will go on living our shame. The ancient story is clear: bonds of kinship blessed by God there so that we might not be alone. We are not strangers in this world. We are not isolated beings, but women and men called to a kinship so powerful that it can only be named love. Love is the *innocence* of God's design. Love is the *hope* of God's creation. Love is the *equality* between women and men in the image of God. Love is lived out in the content of kinship: kinship with all life, kinship between human beings, kinship growing out of respect, responsibility, and the right of all to exist with dignity. If, in our fear and isolation, we have distorted this ancient meaning, then we have done more than break kinship with one another. We have broken covenant with God.

**The very beginning
of all creation,
the genesis
of Genesis itself,
was love.**

The Witness:

A Mission Comment

How can Christians help themselves and others to see the thread of

runs throughout all of God's creation? . . .

One of the great human dilemmas of our time is isolation. Loneliness often emerges from the still-frightening corners where human beings are trapped, unloved, and totally on their own. In Western societies, this phenomenon is particularly acute. We lack a sense of kinship with the world around them, much less with one another.

We are naked and abuse of power and patriarchal interpretations of Genesis 2 is a shame.

Is it any real surprise that we abuse this planet? Or that we abuse our life forms? Or that we abuse our human beings? After all, if there is no relationship, how can there be any responsibility? Restoring ourselves to kinship with creation must be a top priority Christian mission. . . . The extended family of Genesis 2 must be our goal, not as a metaphor, but as a covenant, as a sacred pledge that binds us to our commitments in love. How can you help strengthen kinship in your life? With family mem-

bers? With people in your congregation and community? Even with people you think of as strangers?

There are ministries in human relationships all around you: ministries that promote racial understanding; ministries that seek to heal the divisions between men and women; ministries that seek to draw children and elders closer into bonds of love. How many possibilities for these kinds of ministries can you imagine? How many exist in your area right now? How can you help in them?

In the same way, there are ministries to establish kinship with the natural world all around you: programs and projects to protect the planet; local efforts to preserve the garden. With how many of these are you familiar? How many is your church supporting? How can you be a catalyst to bring the two together?

As you consider all of the ways you can help to meet the challenge of an isolated creation, remember the ancient vision of our garden home. It has inspired generations before you. It will inspire generations to come. The arms of your family are long; they stretch through the centuries to embrace you and those whom you love. Take comfort in the knowledge that you are never alone. You are coming home. The family waits to greet you. ■

Whose Image?

Linda Woods Peterson

How would you honestly describe yourself? Take a moment, and before reading further, briefly describe yourself below.



Take a look at what you wrote. What does it say about your self-image? Did you mention any physical flaw? If you did, you are in good company, since women are especially likely to include in a self-description something negative about their body. Why?

Most of us seem to have an image problem. Television, newspapers, radio, magazines, films, billboards, even the packaging we throw away—all these media elements bombard us with images that, to some extent or another, affect us. Much advertising seeks to make us dissatisfied with ourselves in order to sell us a product to make us better. How does this fit with our understanding that we are made in the image of God?

My first recollection of TV was at age five, watching the Mickey Mouse

Club with several girlfriends. Then, on our knees, faces within inches of the small, black-and-white screen, we memorized the moves of our favorite Mouseketeer, Annette. My image in the mirror, however, could never reflect Annette's dark features.

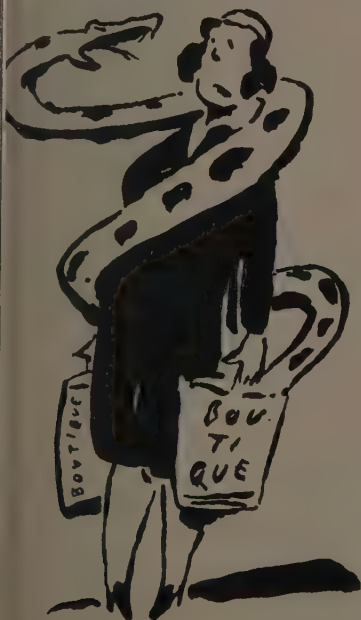
During college I roomed with a woman who was a famous daytime actress. Her soap-opera character created most of the chaos and confusion that fed the story line. On Thursdays she would read her mail. I recall one fan in particular who wrote regularly, in fatherly tones, reprimanding her for her outrageous behavior and deceitful tricks, and suggesting how she might mend her ways.

This man obviously confused his fantasy image of a television character with the life of a real woman. And while most of us have a grip on the reality/fantasy question, there are other powerful and subtle messages that do shape the image we reflected in a mirror, or written in our self-description.

the temptation of the Garden of Eden isn't so far away after all. Instead of a fruit tree holding powers of equality with God, we are enticed with images of perfection.

These images surround me. A glamorous woman sips a diet cola. If I drink this, I too will be TV's perfect 16. If I use this perfume, I will attract men, be wealthy and witty. Once I buy, I discover I need more. One purchase is not enough to save me from being a boring "dweeb"—unattractive, out of style—so I buy more.

Am I not suggesting we replace the old man "Shop Till You Drop" with



*Instead of a fruit tree
holding powers of
equality with God, we
are enticed with
images of perfection.*

"Drop Shopping." But perhaps we need to question these many influences upon us.

Take, for example, moisturizer.

For years, media have portrayed appealing women as young and beautiful, creating a lucrative market for skin products that can, at best, only temporarily produce a more youthful appearance.

I am uneasy with this. I am no longer a "youth." My creator has given me these years on earth, and by design my body grows older. My savior has made provision for me to have eternal life and offers me peace on this subject.

How is my relationship with my creator affected by messages promising youth? Where is my faith and my peace when "dry facial lines" tempt me to buy "the moisturizing cleansing bar"? Where is my commitment to restoring the integrity of creation when the perfect hair product for "dull, limp hair" comes only in an aerosol spray can?

The messages we incorporate into our subconscious affect more than just our body image. If all aspirin is by regulation the same drug, why do we choose one brand name over another, or instead of the cheaper generic version? Why do we choose the peanut butter "most mothers prefer"? Why is a designer sweater worth five times the money of its label-less counterpart? Why can't some of us make any purchase, even of an appropriately priced item, unless it is "on sale"?

The media have been called the "anonymous teacher," and we have been captive—and most often unaware—students. Operating a TV and VCR requires no license, no previewing training, and yet they are the most powerful image-builders invented thus far. Inviting messages

into my home which alter the way I think and feel about myself, my world and my God, is done without a guidebook.

So do we stop watching television, reading and listening? Of course not. Media are windows to our world. But to balance the picture, we need to participate and not just watch pas-

*How is my relationship
with my creator
affected by messages
promising youth?*

sively. We need to think about why we want this or that. We need to examine how we are being shaped and influenced. The awareness that results can help the image that I see reflected in the mirror come closer to the image I claim as a child of God. ■

Linda Woods Peterson, Chicago, is a free-lance communicator who uses moisturizer and irons her husband's shirts while watching "Murder, She Wrote." Her guidebook, Electronic Lifeline: Media Exploration for Christian Youth, was just published by Friendship Press (\$3.95). She is a member of the Media and Values speakers team, and producer of the video "Connections: Faith and World." Both the book and the video are available through Augsburg Fortress.

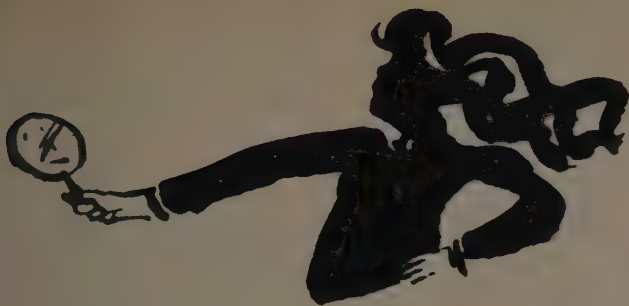


Cracking the Image: *Discussion ideas for a group*

1 Order the issue "Redesigning Women" from the Center for Media and Values and use the articles as a basis of discussion in a circle or discussion group. (Media and Values, 1962 S. Shenandoah, Los Angeles, California 90054. Phone: (213) 552-2944. Issue No. 49, \$4.00.)

2 At home, ask each person to think of one brand-name product they almost always purchase. Then ask them to clip the advertising that they find from magazines and newspapers that promotes that product. (Examining the product's packaging might also be revealing.) Have each participant share these, and suggest why the images connected with the product are appealing.

3 Planning to attend the Women of the ELCA First Triennial Convention in Anaheim, California? When there, consider attending the Media and Values workshop. If possible, extend your visit, and while in California take a tour of Hollywood, visit a game show, spend a day at Disneyland. Report back to your group about observations of reality and fantasy and the Hollywood image.



Comment Box

“Whose Image?” is the first of three articles on media and its impact on our lives and faith by Linda Woods Peterson. Consider completing the short form below and mailing it to Lutheran Woman Today, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631, Attn.: Linda Woods Peterson. Responses received by June 1, 1990 will be used to help the author shape her final article, scheduled for publication in the December 1990 LWT.

1. Name your favorite television program.
2. Which character on that program do you find most appealing?
3. Why do you respond to this character positively?

(optional)

Name: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Age: _____

Once Upon a Time in Anaheim

Julie Mehlbe

Do you have a special memory of your mother reading to you? I do, and I know my mother does too. We both cherish our "Once upon a time" memories. The First Triennial Convention of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America presents its own opportunities for mothers and daughters attending the convention together to create lasting memories, deepening their relationship with each other and with God.

Mothers and daughters coming together at the convention will share more than time and space. They will share information, Bible study and worship experiences. What a wonderful way to grow in God's love together! Here are just a few of the many mother-daughter stories of the convention.

One mother-daughter combination planning to attend the First Triennial Convention together is Sue Edison-Swift, associate editor of *Lutheran Woman Today*, and her mother, Norma Edison, of Independence, Wisconsin. Norma has been a leader and Bible study participant in her congregations' women's organizations for over 30 years. Sue says that her mother's commitment to her church women's groups was an important part of their life together as Sue was growing up. Sue remembers attending general meetings and mother-daughter programs with her



A shared memory could certainly plant the seed for future Women of the ELCA participation.

mother, as well as the flurry of housecleaning before hosting circle meetings.

This will be the first churchwide convention for both Norma and Sue. "I probably wouldn't have thought to come if Sue wasn't involved," comments Norma, "and Sue probably wouldn't be involved if I hadn't introduced her to the community to be found in women's groups." Sometimes things do come full circle.

Some of the daughters attending the convention will no doubt be children coming to enjoy with their mothers and families the many vacation opportunities in the Anaheim area. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, o

way to Disneyland, these young-daughters might catch the excitement of the gathering?! This shared memory could certainly plant the seed for future Women of the ELCA participation.

Another mother-daughter story is especially close to my heart. I became involved in the women's organization through the encouragement and example of my mother and will be attending the triennial convention with her. As the recent merging of three former women's groups occurred, I found myself elected to the Central/Southern Illinois Synod Women's board and my involvement in love for the Lord and all that the women's organization represents continues to grow. I am looking forward to experiencing the event with my mom, Jeanne Rapp, churchwide president of Women of the ELCA. I know the convention will be a lasting memory for both of us.

Another special mother-daughter convention story needs to be told. Terry Bowes, Rocky Mountain Synodical Women's Organization President, had tragedy strike her family 10 years ago when her 20-year-old daughter, Stephanie, took her own life. In the aftermath, friends, family, the women's organization and the church community surrounded Terry's family with support and love.

One measure of that love took the form of monies contributed and committed to a certificate of deposit. Terry's family decided that every three years the interest income from that certificate will go to provide a grant to a young woman from the Rocky Mountain Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) to attend a Women of the ELCA triennial convention. In addition, at its fall convention, the Rocky Mountain SWO held a special offering to increase the grant.



Mother and daughters coming together at the convention will share more than time and space.

"What better way to take my daughter—and other daughters—to the convention," Terry commented. "I know Stephanie would have liked the idea."

Mothers and daughters are in different rhythms of their lives. Some are nurturing children, others are working outside the home, others volunteer, others are care-givers, others receive care, some combine these "rhythms." Even though mothers and daughters differ in age and often have different daily living experiences, we need to recognize what we share in common and that many vital issues facing women today relate to all, both mature and young.

For instance, one workshop planned for the convention is "Parenting for Peace and Justice." Just

glancing at the title, women without children, or with grown children, may mistakenly assume this topic is not for them. Not so. "Parenting for

by promoting a sense of global family enabling all people to work for world peace, and encouraging environmental awareness.

As you review triennial convention material and learn more about activities and workshop experiences offered, why not consider the possibility of attending with your mother or daughter? Or, if you can't both attend, help with your mom's or your daughter's travel expenses and give the experiences of a churchwide gathering as a Mother's Day gift.

Consider, too, encouraging in your home area mother-daughter programming on topics such as parenting for peace with justice. Whatever else you do, remember to lift up in prayer the Women of the ELCA First Triennial Convention and "Celebrate God's Creation" wherever you are, creating and sharing many special memories. ■

*Julie Mehlberg,
Pontiac, Illinois,
is a teacher,
mother and active
participant in
Women of the
ELCA.*



Many vital issues facing women today relate to all, both mature and young.

"Peace and Justice" is especially concerned with how families of all types can work together to live less materialistically and more cooperatively by helping children—one's own, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and students—develop healthy attitudes

Off to the Convention Together?

Will you be attending the First Triennial Convention with your mother, daughter, grandmother, sister, best friend (or some other special combination)? For possible inclusion in a convention newspaper, tell your story of a shared memory in the making. Be sure to include both names, where each of you lives, your ages and relationship. Briefly describe why attending the convention together is especially meaningful to you. You might also include a daytime phone number. Send by June 15, 1990 to Women of the ELCA Convention Publicity, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.

Trees for Creation

Anna Mae Patterson

The story of Elzéard Bouffier is a favorite of mine. At age 55, we're told, a quiet Frenchman began planting trees. By the time he died at age 70, he had planted more than a million trees—acorns, beechnuts, and chestnut seeds—one at a time, in the barren, windy, waterless mountains of southeastern France.

Jean Giono tells the story in the booklet *The Man Who Planted Hope and Grew Happiness*. * "It was [Bouffier's] opinion that this land was dying for want of trees . . . [and] having the very pressing business of his own, he had resolved to remedy this state of affairs." Giono writes that when he revisited Bouffier 34 years later, he saw rebuilt farms and villages amid lush, vibrant, stream-filled forests.

Far away in the Himalayas of northern India today's ecological heretics are not waiting for deforestation to devastate their homelands. Through the nonviolent *Chipko* movement, they protect forests from the axes that are felling trees for consumer-oriented development projects.

Chipko means "to hug," and these brave women have literally wrapped their bodies around trees to save them. The slogan of their movement says it all: "Soil, water and vegetation are the gifts of the forest; soil, water and vegetation are the basis of life."

We need to learn the lessons of the Indian women and of the story of the man who planted trees: that forests of diverse trees sustain our lives, and that deforestation is a threat to all of us.

This July the Women of the ELCA will plant a tree as the symbol of the theme "Celebrate God's Creation" at the organization's First Triennial Convention in Anaheim, California. They are also encouraging congregations and Women of the ELCA congregational units to show support for God's creation by planting trees in their communities. (See "To Plant a Tree," page 18.)

Let each of us join this effort and plant a tree, or many trees, now and every year. And let us work for ordinances and laws to protect the trees around us. In this way we become partners with creation, renewing the earth with love and faith. ■

Anna Mae Patterson gardens and plants trees in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A Lutheran and member of the Order of St. Martin and Teresa, Patterson also welcomes international visitors at the Heartland Hospitality House.

*The booklet is available for \$2.40, shipping included, from Friends of Nature, P.O. Box 223, Brooksville, Maine 04617.

To Plant a Tree

A Responsive Reading

Ruth Ellen Sievert

This tree-planting litany is to be part of the closing Eucharist at the First Triennial Convention of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Anaheim on July 15, 1990. Congregations throughout the church are invited, and encouraged, to use the litany and plant a tree at their church on the same Sunday, July 15. (Depending on climate and weather, congregations may want to schedule such a tree-planting service for some other date.) Woven into the litany are many of the images and phrases from the convention theme hymn, "God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens" (*Lutheran Book of Worship* 463).^{*} The litany is designed to be used as a post-communion service element, in place of the canticle and benediction. Using the litany this way will enable congregations to move the whole worship service outside following communion, and conclude the service with this action.

Leader: God, who stretched the spangled heavens infinite in time and place . . .

Congregation: Help us remember each day that you are, indeed, the Creator and Giver of all life and that we are called to be faithful stewards of all creation.

L: We have ventured worlds undreamed of since the childhood of our race.

C: Humble our grandiose spirits which would have us believe that we have mastered creation through our own ventures.

L: We have known the ecstasy of winging through untraveled realms of space; we have probed the secrets of the atom, yielding unimagined power.

C: Give us self-control to refrain from using our knowledge for selfish power, and grant us the wisdom and grace to use our knowledge to further the work of the gospel.

L: We, your children in your likeness, share inventive powers with you.

C: May we be challenged anew to be children of creative purpose, serving others and honoring you.

L: We plant this tree as an act of reuniting ourselves with all creation.

C: May our dreams prove rich with promise, and may all our endeavors be well begun.

L: We plant this tree to say no to the ravaging of Mother Earth, no to the squandering of our resources.

C: To say yes to God's creative purpose in the world.

L: We plant this tree to give back to the earth something of what we have taken.

C: Great Creator, still creating, show us what we yet may do.

L: Celebrate God's creation!

C: And shout for joy because we *belong* to Mother Earth.

L: Celebrate God's creation!

C: And let the trumpets sound because we are *becoming* a new people.

L: Celebrate God's creation!

C: And let the dancing commence as we make covenant to be a *blessing* to the world.

L: Wondrous God, Creator, Christ and Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

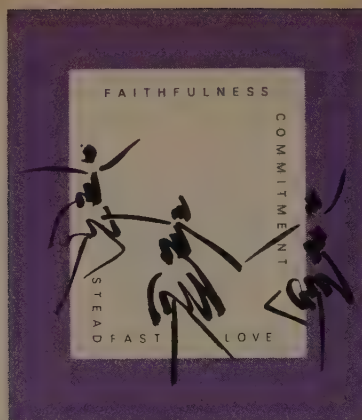
L: Let us go forth from this place in the freedom of the cross, to love and serve God.

C: Thanks be to God. ■

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**Companions on
Your Journey:
Studies of
Biblical Women**

Introduction—Part II

Gifts for the Journey

In Sessions 1–4, we traveled with Ruth, Naomi and Boaz as they found themselves part of God's plan for salvation in the world. In the next four sessions we will shift gears and move into the New Testament. Here, we will explore companionship in the early Christian community. We will see how women and men were partners in ministry and discover anew the variety of gifts God has provided to nurture the community and spread the gospel.

We hope, too, that these stories of early Christians will parallel your own experiences as you explore your own stories of commitment and partnership between men and women, and between women with differing gifts.

Together, we will also look for ways to make that partnership more complete as we travel into the future.

May God go with you, and may you, on this leg of the journey, find more companions with whom to share bread.

*E. Louise Williams
Phyllis N. Kersten
Bible study writers*

5 A Long List of Companions

Study Text: Romans 16:1-16

E. Louise Williams & Phyllis N. Kersten

Pause for a few moments to think about one person who has been a significant influence, or source of encouragement and direction, in your Christian life. Who is that person? How has that person influenced your life? How has she or he shared bread with you? If that person were here now, what would you thank him or her for? Take some time now to thank God for this special companion on your faith journey.

In Romans 16, St. Paul lists some of the people who have been his companions in ministry and mission.

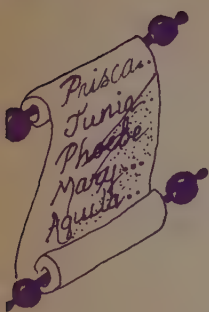
JOURNEYING THROUGH THE WORD

Read Romans 16:1-16.

Some of the names are familiar. Some are strange and hard to pronounce. In many cases, we know very little about these people except for what is written in these short verses. Because some of the names are unfamiliar, it is even difficult for those of us who do not read the verses in the original Greek language to know if the names are of women or men.

Go through the verses and list the names that you think are women's names.

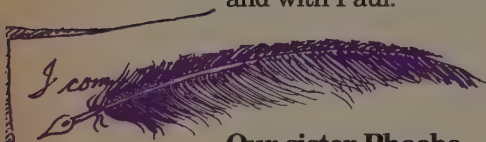
■ In recent years, scholars have become increasingly aware that much written history omits or underplays the lives and contributions of women and people from certain ethnic or cul-



tural groups. Even the Scriptures often fail to note the involvement or contributions of women. Some contemporary students of the Bible believe that as we look at Scripture, we need also to do a little reading between the lines in order to understand and appreciate more fully the roles that women had, especially in the early Christian community.

In one sense, it is really remarkable that women are mentioned at all. Certain biblical scholars suggest that the fact that Paul lists so many women in Romans 16 indicates that women were involved on many levels in the life of the church. They say that those named and listed are likely only a few of the women who were companions in the early days of the church.

By piecing together what Paul says here with what we know from other sources, we can begin to get a picture of the remarkable partnership of these special people with each other and with Paul.



Our sister Phoebe

Romans 16:1-2 serves as a "letter of recommendation" for Phoebe, who is believed to have carried this letter. Hospitality to traveling Christians was an important part of the life of the early church. But the early Christians had no way of knowing whether the strangers who presented themselves at their doors were really companions in Christ, impostors looking for free accommodations, or spies gathering information for future persecutions.

In this letter of introduction, Paul uses two key words to describe Phoebe. The first is translated as "deaconess" in the Revised Standard Version. The Greek word *diakonos* literally means "servant." When that same word is used in certain other places in Paul's writings, it is translated in the RSV as "minister" or "servant." (See, for example, 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 3:6 and 11:23; Ephesians 3:7; and Colossians 1:24-26.)

2 What difference, if any, would it make in the way you thought about Phoebe if instead of being called a deaconess, she were called a servant or a minister of the church?

The second word Paul uses for Phoebe is translated in the RSV as "helper." The Greek word, *prostatis*, literally means "one who stands before." That same Greek word also carries the meaning of "president," or leader of a guild or club. It can also mean a patron or protector.

What differing connotations do the words *helper*, *der*, *president*, *patron* or *protector* have for you? What would each of these words suggest about Phoebe's role in the church at Cenchreae?

We cannot tell from the text what role Phoebe actually had among the early Christians. We cannot assume that the words translated in English as "deaconess" and "helper" refer to special positions or offices in the church between 55 and 60 A.D., when the letter to the Romans was written. The office of deaconess came later. We can assume, however, that Phoebe was a woman of means, an important person in her Christian community, and someone whose ministry Paul valued highly.

Are there women like Phoebe in your congregation? If so, what words would you use to describe them? What titles do they have, if any?

Greetings to the companions

In Romans 16:2-15, Paul singles out individuals in the Christian community at Rome whom he especially wants to greet. (We will save Prisca [or Priscilla] and Aquila, mentioned in verse 3, for Session 6.)

Prisca and Aquila (verse 3), Mary (verse 6), and Andronicus and Junia(s) (verse 7) are all Jewish names. The remainder of the names are Latin and Greek. Some of the names are common slave names, and others are names of people known to be liberated slaves. Some names are of wealthy business people.

5

What does this mixture suggest about the community to which this letter is addressed? What would have been some of the blessings of companionship or solidarity among a group with such diversity? What might have been some of the tensions caused by this diversity?

Beloved

■ Paul describes four women (Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis) as hard workers in verses 6 and 12. He obviously has warm feelings for many women and men on this list. Note how often the word *beloved* is used. And he seems to have a special affection for Rufus's mother, whom he calls his own mother as well.

Some readers speculate that Rufus was the son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross (see Mark 15:21), but there is not enough evidence to say that without a doubt. Narcissus may have been a former slave in Emperor Claudius's household, later executed by Nero.

All of the 25 individuals and two households to be greeted knew Paul personally. They had worked with him. In a sense these people were Paul's introduction to the Roman Christians. They could tell their community what sort of person he was and what his ministry was like—all of this in preparation for Paul's first visit to Rome, where he hoped to gather support for his work.

A female apostle?

Romans 16:7 refers to Andronicus and Junia(s). From the Greek manuscripts it is impossible to tell if the second name is male or female. Some manuscripts render the name as *Julia*. The earliest commentators on the Scriptures (Origen, Jerome, and John Chrysostom), dating as early as the third century A.D., understood the name to be that of a woman. And many contemporary students of the Bible agree that the best evidence indicates that the name is Junia, a common Roman female name. One guess is that Andronicus and Junia were another husband and wife, or a sister and brother team who were close co-workers with Paul, having been imprisoned with him at some point. They were either well known by the apostles or they were themselves apostles who were well known. The Greek could be translated either way. If the latter is cor



rect, we may have mention here of a male/female apostolic team.

■ For Paul, the concept of “apostles” meant more than merely the 12 followers of Jesus mentioned in the gospels. An apostle meant first and foremost someone who had seen the risen Lord and was commissioned for special ministry. Paul himself was this sort of apostle (note 1 Corinthians 1:1). An apostle could also be a special messenger sent out by a particular church to perform a special task (such as those mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25). Junia and Andronicus, some scholars believe, were apostles involved in missionary work, evangelism and church planting.

Clearly women and men worked side by side in the churches Paul knew. Partnership seemed natural and accepted.

What do you think might have been some of the advantages for having a male/female team for such missionary work then? What could be some of the advantages today?

Note how many times in these 15 verses the phrases “in Christ Jesus” or “in the Lord” occur. What does this affirmation imply about the source of the partnership and solidarity among the people listed? (You may wish to look at Galatians 3:27-28.)

Partnering from then to now

Do you know of, or participate in, any ministries in the church in which women and men are in partnership with each other? How would you describe them? What enables this partnership and sharing to happen?

9 Can you describe an instance in today's church where you see—and perhaps experience—a lack of partnership between women and men? What do you think gets in the way of full partnership between women and men in the church? What could help promote partnership in these instances?



Kiss of peace

This section in Romans 16 closes with, "Greet each other with a holy kiss." This form of greeting was common in the early Christian community as a sign of affection and peace. In the Lutheran liturgy we enact this greeting of peace with a handshake or a word or two, before we present our offerings. We remember Jesus' words in Matthew 5: "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother [or sister] has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother [or sister], and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

In a tangible and physical way, we express that in spite of our differences, Christ who is our peace has made us one (Ephesians 2:14). And now we, women and men alike, can offer our gifts—as did the early Christians in Rome—in ministry for the nurture of the church and the spreading of the gospel.

Where do we find the strength and courage to work together in that task, as those early believers did with Paul? By gathering around the table of the Lord, receiving and sharing bread with beloved companions who join with us on the way.

10 Does your congregation exchange the greeting of peace? If so, what does it mean for you? What new meaning might it have in the context of this session?

COMPANIONS IN DEED

Sometimes partnership happens naturally. More often, though, it needs to be encouraged. Recall, for a moment, some of the places where you saw or experienced a lack of partnership in today's church. Talk about ways that you, individually or as a group, could foster growth in partnership in one or more of those places. Remember that the goal is to build community, foster partnership, and increase solidarity. What could you do to help that happen? (The Bible study resource book gives some examples and ideas.)

COMPANIONS IN PRAYER AND PRAISE

In May we celebrate the Ascension of our Lord, when Jesus entrusted his followers with the ministry he began. In preparation for worship, recall those women and men you named in the beginning of the session—those who have influenced, encouraged or shaped your Christian life. Also recall the names of those people with whom you have experienced partnership in the gospel (see question 8 on page 25). Read the Epistle lesson for Ascension, Ephesians 1:16-23. Then pray this prayer:

O God, you have given us many gifts—especially people of faith to encourage us in our own journey. We thank you now for these people who have been special to us. (Here the names may be mentioned silently or aloud.)

We thank you for the opportunities you have given us to express and experience partnership of women and men in the gospel. We thank you now for these people who have been special to us. (Mention names silently or aloud.)

We ask for your spirit to fill us; to give us wisdom, understanding and vision; to open us to the possibilities for fuller partnership between women and men in your service; and to give us strength and courage to move together as companions for the sake of the world you so dearly love, in the name of Jesus Christ who makes us one. Amen.

JOURNEYING ON

In Session 6, we will become more fully acquainted with Priscilla and Aquila, companions of Paul and of each other, who shared their special gifts in a variety of ways. ■

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The Fare Share



Jean Martensen and Netsie Griffith

Tucked securely in all our memories are vivid images of food. With little provocation every school-age child can mentally savor distinctive aromas and flavors—each one linked to a family ritual, a holiday tradition, a special treat, or perhaps even a threat or promise, since food can also be used to reward and punish.

Long before we learn to read, food contributes to our sense of place in the world. Through the portions allocated to us we develop a sense of what is possible and what might be

denied. Through grains and vegetables, meats and sweets, we discover over time our cultural heritage, our position, and our dependency on the water, soil and technology of our community and nation. Sufficient food helps us become healthy, thriving adults, while those without enough food experience chronic and acute problems, their malnutrition robbing them of initiative, energy and hope, and condemning them to an existence at the subsistence level.

Through the food we share with others—whether in the intimacy

Food for Peace & Justice

Bierock (Eastern Europe)

Hot roll mix or yeast bread dough
1½ lbs. ground beef*
1 medium-sized cabbage, chopped
1 small onion, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste



Brown the ground beef; drain off grease. Add chopped cabbage and onion. Cook mixture until tender. Use one box of hot-roll mix, or yeast-bread recipe. Roll out dough and cut into squares. Put filling on squares. Fold over and pinch corners together. Bake according to bread recipe. Makes 16 to 18 medium-sized bierocks.

*Less meat and more cabbage can be used.

Food for Peace & Justice

Shafel The Middle East "Burger"



1 cup chick peas (dried)
1 onion
1 clove garlic (or to taste)
2 cups parsley
1 green peppers (optional)

2 tsp. cumin
Salt and pepper to taste
1 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. baking soda
Oil for frying

Soak chick peas overnight, then wash and drain. Grind chick peas, onions, garlic, parsley and hot pepper into a smooth paste. (A food processor or meat grinder will work best.) Add salt, pepper, cumin, and baking powder; mix thoroughly.

Before frying, add baking soda to mixture. Shape into balls and flatten slightly. Pan fry or deep-fat fry until golden brown.

Makes 30-40 patties, often served in pita bread.

Shafel mixes are available and easy to make.

family table or through the largeness of church and government, we reveal the importance we place on hospitality, community, and service. Through our sharing we realize we are part of the larger community of planet earth.

Each of us who have been guests in other lands especially remember the kindnesses we have been received by our hosts. Long after the details of our conversations are forgotten, we remember the dishes that were served, the places where we sat, and the way we ate our meal together. Sometimes, if we are bold enough and the ingredients might be available in our home communities, we ask our host for the recipes. In this way we show our determination to refresh the memory of the meal and the faces of the people we met.

The planners for a special event at the First Triennial Convention of the ELCA have kept all these realities about food in mind. To be held on Saturday, July 14, this "Fare Share" event, as it is named,

will be unique in a number of ways.

First, unlike most banquets, the meal will help participants reflect on the fact that, in comparison to the rest of the world, most United States citizens eat much more than their "fair share."

Through the eating of four main basic dishes from cultures around the world, participants will be able to enjoy and experience nutritious food from other lands. The sharing of this simple food will provide a way to express the values of the Christian faith.

Another goal of the Fare Share planners has been to eliminate throw-away products. For this reason, all participants in attendance will eat from specially commissioned pottery plates, which they will be able to keep after the meal. The convention logo and date will be inscribed on the back of the plates, making them a beautiful commemorative piece.

Potter Mike Schlyer, owner of the Flat Earth Clayworks in Wichita,

Kansas, is the creator of the six-inch, earth-blue plates that will be used at Fare Share. An environmentally conscious craftsman, Schlyer uses recycled packing and banana boxes to ship his plates. (Flat Earth Clayworks, incidentally, is as innovative in its hiring practices as in the pottery it fashions, employing Southeast Asian refugees and enabling them to become independent in their new home.)

The menu for the July 14 evening is based on the one staple important to cultures throughout the world, a universal symbol of physical and spiritual nourishment: bread. As this issue went to print, the proposed menu includes an egg roll, bean burrito, bierock*, and falafel*. This main fare will be supplemented with coffee, tea and fortune cookies. The slips of wisdom found in the cookies will emphasize the convention theme, "Celebrate God's Creation."

Convention-goers are welcome to bring guests to the event. Held in the spacious Anaheim convention center, Fare Share will be a festival in which one's physical and spiritual appetites will be whetted. ■

***Recipes for bierock and falafel** are included on these pages for your information and as ideas for a "Sharing the Fare" menu. Personal cookbooks, the library and "people resources" from your church and community are excellent sources for menu ideas.

Jean Martensen and Netsie Griffith both serve as staff members of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Commission for Church in Society. Martensen is director for peace education and has worked extensively both in the fields of education and peacemaking. Griffith, an ELCA associate in ministry, serves as assistant for peace education.

Reading of the Fare Share event scheduled for the First Triennial Convention—with its special focus on commemorative plates and festive music—might make those of us unable to be in Anaheim feel a bit better.

No need to feel that way. Here about planning a similar event for your own congregation or Women's ELCA congregational union. What an inspiring way to: send your conventioners off to Anaheim—or welcome them back, support the Decade of Churches in Solidarity With Women, "Celebrate God's Creation!" or (provide your own reason)!

One way the Fare Share event can be adapted for a smaller group is an *agape meal*. An agape meal is best suited for smaller groups, because its purpose is to build and share in community.

After an opening prayer and blessing, the gathered would break into small circles of six or seven. The food is passed around the circle, with each neighbor serving another.

During the sharing of food, c

Sharing the Fare

ion is focused on questions, each person is asked to share his thoughts without the group waiting until all have spoken. Idea is to share feelings, concerns and joys as well as food. The meal might close with sharing a grace, a closing hymn or prayer and benediction. (See "Celebrate Creation: An Agape Meal," p. 16.)

Another way to adapt the Fare Share would be to plan a hunger relief event for your congregation. In addition to increasing awareness of hunger resources, such an event might include an offering for the World Hunger Appeal. The World Hunger and justice resource guide, mailed to ELCA congregations in the September 1989 *Hunger* issue, describes and provides order information for many such resources. While supplies last, single copies of the catalog may be requested for congregational use by calling ELCA Resource Information Service, 1-800-638-3522.

No one sort of bread or starch is a staple in every culture, yet the vari-

eties are myriad. How fitting, then, to design a Fare Share event using breads as a key to cross-cultural awareness.

Will one of the Woman to Woman participants (see page 40) be visiting your area? Does your congregation participate in the ELCA Synod Companion Program? If so, planning an event around foods from that particular tradition would be especially meaningful.

Participants in Women of the ELCA "One in Christ" events form the basis of the Women of the ELCA Speakers Bureau. These women, from across the country, speak eloquently of their cross-cultural experiences and commitments. Why not invite a speaker to share at a Fare Share event with a cross-cultural emphasis? For more information, write: Speakers Bureau, Women of the ELCA, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.

Blessings on your efforts to participate in the spirit of the Fare Share event from the Women of the ELCA First Triennial Convention.

—SES



Red and White Carnations

Barbara Benedict Hibsichman

It was Mother's Day. I dreaded going to church and seeing families sitting with their moms. I hated being in church alone. I hated admitting to myself and others that mother left, and that my parents were divorced. I never talked much about it, but I realized everyone in the church probably knew more about it than I did.

I had not been left motherless. My grandmother had taken mother's place—gently, sweetly doing the things mothers do. But now she was gone too—dead as of last January.

"Maybe I should have stayed home," I said to myself as I walked up the church steps. A kind, elderly gentleman opened the large wooden door.

"Good morning, and Happy Mother's Day," Mrs. Spence greeted several churchgoers in the narthex. "Please take a red carnation if your mother is living, and a white one if she has passed on," she instructed.

I must have stood in front of the large basket of flowers for several

minutes. I couldn't decide which to take.

My real mother is alive, but dead to me, I reasoned. She left when I was two years old, and I've only seen her twice in all my 16 years.

The first time she showed up was two years ago. It was my brother's high school graduation. Mrs. Daugherty, a teacher, came up to me and said, "Barbara, this is your mother."

"My mother!" I snapped. "What is she doing here?" Behind Mrs. Daugherty stood a brown-haired, short woman who smiled at me with a warm smile.

"Hi, Barbara. You've turned out to be quite a young lady," she said.

"Hello," I managed to respond. She looked at me and waited for me to say something else. I didn't know what to say or do. The seconds seemed like hours. I just stood there and looked at her. *Do I look like her?* I wondered. Janice, one of my classmates, rescued me from the awkward moment by asking me to introduce some friends on the stage to have

es taken. I excused myself and
sure I was lost in the crowd.
second and last time I saw her
t grandmother's funeral. She
o talk to me then, but I just
down. I didn't feel like talking
one.

ve a mental image of what she
like, but no memories of any-
that we did together. To call
other seems strange because
mother Benedict was the *real*
r to me. She took care of me,
shopping with me, and saw to
my homework got done.

ally *should take a white car-*
e, I rationalized. Grandmother
he real mother to me. She was
when I needed to talk. She
t me the art of homemaking.
nstructed me in cooking and
g—the Hungarian way.

e used to sit by her quilting
and sing hymns in her native
e. I would perch nearby and lis-
her stories of how she immi-
d to America, how God kept her

safe, and provided for her needs. She
would always say, "Use what God
gives you wisely. If you pray for your
daily bread, then don't waste it."

Looking back on the time I spent
with her, I realize her faith influ-
enced me much like the patchwork
quilts she made—many fragmented
pieces sewn together to form a com-
plete pattern. The dominant pieces
were love, joined by threads of laugh-
ter and tears.

I pulled a white carnation from the
basket and took a seat in the back
pew. The organist began the prelude,
and quietness settled over the con-
gregation. I sat clutching the white
carnation, while my heart held tight-
ly to the past. Grief surfaced again,
and I saw nothing promising in my
future. Most of the people knew that
my real mother was alive. Would
they understand why I took a white
carnation? Does God understand
that I'm hurting?

The choir began to take their
seats. The organist played softly. I



raised my eyes and focused on the large wooden cross behind the choir loft.

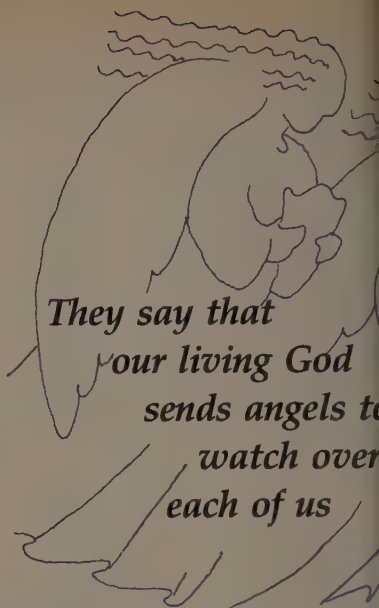
Oh, Jesus, you do understand, don't you? You were hurt. You were rejected by those you loved. Yet, you chose to forgive them. Help me to do the same. If I meet my mother again, help me to be loving. Thank you that you are always near, and that you promise never to leave. Thank you for eternal life. I know I will see grandmother again. Amen.

The organist continued to play as the pastor took his seat behind the pulpit. I looked back in the narthex and noticed the basket of flowers. Quickly, but quietly, I walked back to the flower arrangement to put the white carnation back. I wanted to prove to God and myself that I was willing to deal with the past, *and* the future. All the red carnations were taken, but my eye caught a glimpse of one single red and white carnation lying on the table. It probably had been taken out of the basket because it was neither all red nor all white.

"God does understand my feelings!" I realized. "The florist didn't make a mistake. This carnation is just right for me on this Mother's Day. I do have a mother, who is alive and needs my forgiveness. Grandmother Benedict is gone for now, but alive spiritually and in my memories."

With a thankful heart, I took the red-and-white carnation back to my seat and joined the rest of my church in worship. ■

Barbara Hibschan, Warren, New Jersey, is a free-lance writer, mother and wife of a pastor. This story draws from a personal experience the author had when she was 16 years old.



*They say that
our living God
sends angels to
watch over
each of us*

Mae and I were to go to the convention together, but I wasn't really looking forward to it.

Mae was not the kind of person you could get to know very easily. Her husband Bill had served as president of our congregation for many terms, but Mae always stayed in the background, hardly speaking enough for anyone to hear. Sometimes she wore such heavy makeup that you wondered where she was under all of it.

And just when you counted on her to be there for an important meeting, she wouldn't show up.

And why she always wore black with long sleeves and a high collar right up to her chin, even on the hottest summer days, I never could figure out.

Mae and I had met after the ship service at church on Sunday morning to fill out the convention registration forms and decide which two workshops we wanted to attend. We agreed to each choose one and then go together to both of them.

One Day the Angels Cheered



A SHORT STORY

Barbara Jurgensen

nose a morning workshop on neighborhood outreach because I felt our congregation could be doing more than it was.

I spent more time choosing the noon workshop. Maybe the shop on youth, she thought, because her kids were getting near that age. Or maybe the one on the elderly. Maybe the one on abuse in the family. I said that any of them would work with me.

She said, "Why don't we go to the church in the family, then." So we put it down.

Finally convention time came and we traveled there together, quietly. At the opening worship it was workshop time. The morning event was quite helpful. I came away with a lot of good ideas. After lunch we set out to find the room where the abuse workshop was to be held. By the time we found it, the first of three panel members was being introduced, a woman who had been hospitalized for a while as a child after being severely abused by her mother. I gained some insights into what to look for in

children who are being mistreated.

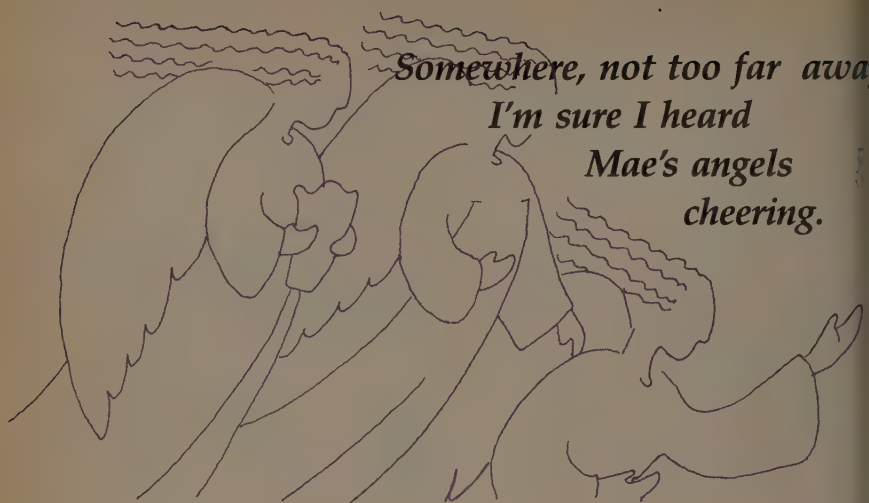
The next panelist had been sexually molested during her early teens by her uncle. She described the terrible feelings that she carried with her for many years.

The third panelist told about her husband beating her up every few weeks, injuring her so badly that she couldn't go out of the house for several days. I noticed that Mae was getting a small package of tissues out of her purse.

The panelist said that her husband seemed like such a wonderful person to everyone, and that he was pleasant and agreeable around them, but that when he was alone with her something inside him snapped and he would fly into a rage and attack her.

Mae was blowing her nose repeatedly.

This panelist said that she was always so full of bruises that she had to cover her arms and neck whenever she went out in public, and try to hide the welts on her face with a thick layer of makeup.



Now the tears were running down Mae's face.

The panelist said that it had gotten to where she thought that she must be doing something wrong for her husband to treat her like that, that it made her feel that she was to blame. But that she didn't dare tell anyone what her husband was doing to her for fear that they wouldn't believe her, and because she was so ashamed that he would treat her like that—and because he might then do something even worse to her.

Mae was sobbing noiselessly into a handful of tissues. I put my arm around her.

The panelist was saying, "They say that our living God sends angels to watch over each of us, and that these angels grieve when they see us doing something that hurts someone else. But our angels grieve even more when they see us letting someone else unnecessarily hurt us."

Then the panelist concluded with, "We would not stand by and let our husband hurt our children. Should we stand by and let them hurt us?"

When the workshop was over, I suggested that we go back to our hotel room.

There it was quite a while before Mae could speak. Finally she said, "Her story is my story. Now I know why I've been the way I've been."

We sat very quietly for a while. "It's not right for me to let my husband go on treating me the way he does." There was resolve in her voice. "When we get back I'm going to tell him to go to counseling with me. If he's willing, maybe there's some help for us. But if he's not, it's not right for me to stay around and be beaten any more. It's just not right."

Somewhere, not too far away, I'm sure I heard Mae's angels cheering. ■

Barbara Jurgensen is director of admissions and assistant professor of ministry and contextual education at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. She previously served for six years as a parish pastor in inner-city Chicago.

Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

uses wheat to help ale illiterates in gladesh

primary school enrollment rate in Bangladesh means that much of the rural population—especially women—is illiterate. The Lutheran World Federation's World Service program and the Rangpur District Rural Service are providing support to poor families and encouraging them to send their daughters to school. Each girl, registered as a LWS/RDRS card holder, is given 21 pounds of wheat for four consecutive days of school attendance.

us, through the church and its members, help provide the gift of education to those who might not otherwise have opportunity, O Giver of gifts.

spice programs: ital ministry

Founded in 1977, hospice ministry is fairly new. ELCA pastor William H. H. directs a hospice program in Marietta, Georgia, for persons with cancer. Another ELCA pastor, Mark B. Aurelius, is chaplain at Bethesda Hospital, St. Paul, Minnesota. She leads a bereavement program and also ministers to other caregivers who serve the dying and the bereaved.

strengthen those who suffer from terminal illness and those who minister to them and to their care-givers, Lord of Life.

New graduates assume place in the world

Many Evangelical Lutheran Church in America members graduate this month from one of the 29 ELCA colleges and universities, or from another of the numerous colleges with which this country is blessed. Education is a gift to be treasured as a blessing from God.

Bless all graduates, O Lord, that they too may be gifts in their homes, churches, workplaces and communities.

African women call on churches to look at debt crisis

At a women's assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches, African women called on AACC member churches to address the debt crisis in Africa. Drawing delegates from 38 African countries, the conference asked churches to sensitize and prepare pastors to inform and train others. Delegates observed that the debt crisis is a form of recolonization "because it makes the rich richer and the poor poorer."

Creator God, help us to see the ways we contribute to making the poor poorer. Let us be part of the solution.

Read or listen daily to the news. Build a prayer list to be revised as needs change.

Sonia C. Groenewold is news editor of The Lutheran.

Hooked on Business

Barbara Nelson



As a young bride I went with my husband to a synod convention. When the opening worship service ended, a friend of mine suggested we go shopping. She said it was just a business meeting and would be boring. She assured me we wouldn't miss anything important.

I looked at the agenda. There was one item I had been involved in as a college student. I decided to stay for the discussion on Lutheran conscientious objectors. Fifty years later, after attending 48 synod assemblies, eight churchwide assemblies as an elected delegate, eight triennial conventions of women's organizations, many synodical unit conventions, and four constituting conventions as part of two mergers in the church, I must confess that I am "hooked" on the business of the church.

How come? First of all for the information and understanding that come as a result of the business meetings. As a member of a congregation I want to know what the church is doing outside my congregation. I want to know where money is spent, who spends it, and with what results. I want to know what the outreach ministry is doing. I want to know where in the world my church is.

A business session decides the future direction of an organization. It is here that goals are set, programs determined and priorities and needs are assessed. We are all quick to criticize what the church is doing

or not doing, but are we equally willing to contribute to its planning and vision?

I'm hooked on the business Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America because I care deeply about what happens to women and also about what happens to the organization. I enjoy a good debate on a controversial issue. A wholesome discussion among Christians helps us listen with respect and love to the opinions of others. It helps us to clarify our own opinions.

The business of the organization is a challenge. It challenges my own ministry in my congregation. It challenges my stewardship both my time and my money. During business sessions leadership is chosen and called into account. In our setting we hear and discern the "voice of the people." Individual participation can and does make a difference. Decisions are not "the responsibility, but rather "our responsibility. As an elected delegate there is the responsibility of participation and reporting. The participant (nondelegate) also has a responsibility of learning, sharing and reporting.

To understand and participate intelligently takes a bit of doing. All of us are skilled in parliamentary procedures, consensus building, understanding budgets, goal-setting, new staff person gathering materials for an assembly once made a remark, "It must have been some

important who died, there are many memorials." Do you know the difference between a memorial and a resolution? We need to work hard to write, introduce and support those issues for which we have a vision.

Business meetings can also have moments of humor. Watch at the next meeting or convention for the "comic relief" elements—I guarantee you'll be surprised at how they exist, and how they too play a part in moving the business along. Many of us participate in the

First Triennial Convention in July, may we gain knowledge and understanding. May we care about issues, participate intelligently, be inspired and see visions of a bright future for Women of the ELCA. ■

Barbara Nelson of Lindsborg, Kansas, is a member of the church-wide board of the ELCA Commission for Women. She served on the planning committee for Women of the ELCA and is a former vice-president of Lutheran Church Women.

A Brief Primer of Convention Terms

AGENDA: Items listed in order to be discussed.

CALENDAR YEAR: An accounting period, generally 12 months, which does not necessarily coincide with a calendar year.

MAJORITY: One person over half of those present.

MEMORIAL: A statement of facts, usually with a petition on some issue acted upon, brought to the convention by a synod or synodical women's organization.

NO PREVIOUS QUESTION: Action to close debate immediately.

INITIATING BALLOT: A first ballot for president and vice-president (women of the ELCA) in which all those receiving a vote are on the ballot. It shows preferences without electing anyone. (In some cases called "ecclesiastical ballot.")

ORDERS OF THE DAY: Requires the assembly to conform to its agenda or program.

QUORUM: Minimum number required by constitution to conduct business.

RECOMMENDATION: A motion made about how to deal with an issue.

RESOLUTION: A delegate (or delegates) brings an item to the assembly for action.

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER: The generally accepted rules by which meetings have been conducted since 1876.

RULES OF PROCEDURE: The governing rules for a specific assembly such as who has voice and vote, length of speeches, seating, etc.

International Guests to attend First Triennial Convention

As part of the Woman to Woman program, 27 international women will be visiting synods and attending the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's First Triennial Convention this summer. There will be many opportunities at the convention to meet, greet and engage in dialogue with these special guests.

Woman to Woman is an international, cross-cultural program of awareness and shared understanding between Women of the ELCA and women of Lutheran churches around the world.

The following international guests are scheduled to visit synods in early June, attend the First Triennial Convention and return to their homes later in July. For more information about Woman to Woman plans in your area, contact your synodical women's organization leadership.

Tenagne Negussie
ETHIOPIA

Verna Ingty
INDIA (North)

Rev. Rosmalia Lokollo
Barus
INDONESIA

Rev. Sek-Mui Chan
HONG KONG

Josephine
Razafiarimalala
MADAGASCAR

Mrs. Wern-Chew Li
TAIWAN, R.O.C.

Marthe Satou
Ahmadou
CAMEROON

Mrs. Edna
Chandraseharan
INDIA (South)

Mrs. Comfort John
NIGERIA

Sara Estrado
MEXICO

Sonia (Virginie) Nijim
ISRAEL

Delia Virginia
Ravagnani
ARGENTINA

Ms. Lai Yoke Kiew
MALAYSIA

Ceceilia Brits
SOUTH AFRICA

Mrs. Fenny Hamhola
NAMIBIA

Mrs. Anna Lange
BRAZIL

Anne Kull
USSR

Eleonore Brakke-Geer
SURINAM

Sister Bertha Samwel
TANZANIA

Judit Muntag
HUNGARY

Mrs. Rugare Shiri
ZIMBABWE

Danlette Norris
LIBERIA

Mrs. Junko Miura
JAPAN

Rev. Elizabeth
Bormann
**GERMAN
DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC**

Mrs. Hona Lewen
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Wilhelmina Mpingana
Amueelo-Shikomba
NAMIBIA

Vilma Esparanza
Rodriguez
EL SALVADOR



*Kwang-Ja Yu
Director for
Ecumenical and
Cross-Cultural
Programming*

Namibia as a Continuing Concern

the Constituting Convention of Women of the ELCA in 1987, concern for the plight of Namibians was expressed through a resolution. In September 1988, the executive boards of the Women of the ELCA and the Commission for Women entered into a joint Campaign in Support of Women in Namibia. During the closing days of 1988, Cuba, Angola, South Africa and the United States signed an agreement on a path leading to independence for Namibia.

During 1989 mailings and publications from Women of the ELCA attempted to keep participants informed of progress toward independence. Elections were held in Namibia in November, and the Constituent Assembly met as scheduled. Knowledgeable observers believe the agreement on a constitution will come readily so that independence for Namibia may be achieved by the goal date of April 1990.

What role can Women of the ELCA play to support the Namibian church and people, especially women, after independence? In a 1986 study developed by the United Nations Institute for Namibia a number of socioeconomic factors were listed that an independent Namibia must face: poverty, widespread unemployment, a high illiteracy rate and landlessness among the African population. In addition: foreign economic interests own and control important segments of the

economy; there is an overdependence on nonrenewable mineral resources; the environment is fragile; and all institutions and infrastructures have been developed to meet the requirements of South Africa.

What we can do is give support—both prayerful and financial—to plans developed by our sisters in Namibia as they play their roles in the emerging nation. Each congregation in the ELCA was sent a poster in the January 1990 Women of the ELCA packet suggesting ways to support the campaign.

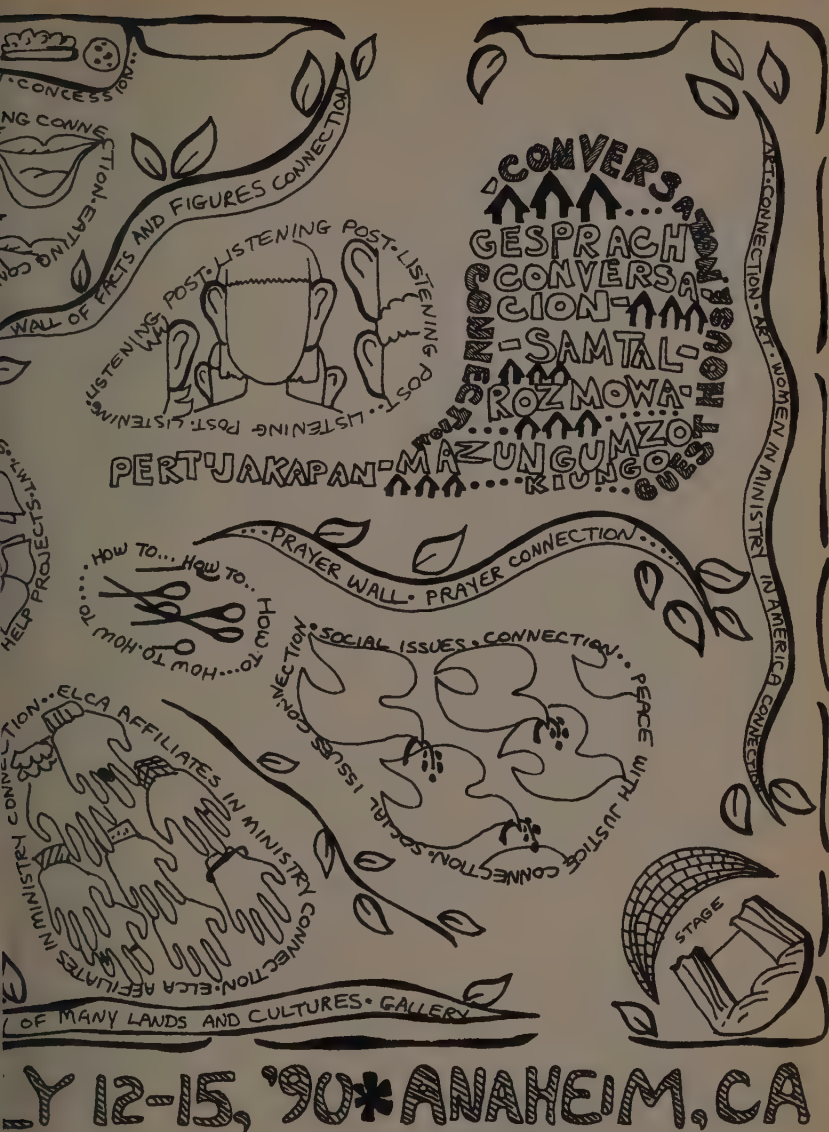
At the First Triennial Convention this July, two Woman to Woman visitors will be from Namibia. Mrs. Fenny Hamhola will represent the Evangelical Lutheran Church of South/West Africa and Wilhelmina Mpingana Amueelo-Shikomba will be the visitor from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia. We look forward to close cooperation and communication with our sisters in Namibia during 1990. ■

*Joan Pope
Director for
Peace with
Justice*





At "Creation's Connections," one might: visit the *Environmental Connection* to look and work with environmental issues; stop by the *Guest House* to meet some Woman to Woman sisters; check out the *Churchwide Con*



to learn about churchwide units; or go to the How-to Place to make a tier or learn a dance. The *Listening Post* is a place to stop, rest, listen and share with speakers, presenters, staff and churchwide leadership. This area will be a great place for people to connect, share their stories and experiences, and the *Prayer Wall* will offer the strongest connection of all. At the wall, women will be able to post or say prayers for themselves, others and for all of creation.

—Valora Starr, *Mission: Growth*

Keynote Speakers

Convention attendees will have the opportunity to hear a number of keynote addresses during the Anaheim convention. Bishop Herbert Chilstrom and Christine Grumm, elected to the highest positions within the ELCA, will be featured speakers on issues pertaining to the church and women in the church.

At the opening celebration on Thursday evening, Sister of Charity Paula Gonzalez will speak on the theme "Celebrate God's Creation." Sister Gonzalez has been actively involved in global awareness issues since the early 1970s as an educator, biologist, ecologist and futurist. She believes that living in a self-sustainable way is being faithful to God's plan for restoring creation.

During the Friday morning meeting, Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, executive secretary for Women in Church and Society for the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, Switzerland, will address the convention. A native of

Kenya, Dr. Kanyoro is widely traveled, a published author, and currently editor of *Women*, a Lutheran women's journal. Dr. Kanyoro will help us increase our understanding and appreciation for all of God's creation, especially in terms of the Women of the ELCA 1990 emphasis "Women: Belonging."

Friday evening, Women of the ELCA will join with those attending the 20th anniversary celebration of the ordination of Lutheran women for a combined event. The group will hear an address by the Rev. Mari Alma Copeland, assistant to the bishop of the North Carolina Synod. Watch for the June 1990 LWT for more information about the celebration of women's ordination.

Mary R. Schramm will speak at the gathering on Saturday morning. Her topic, "Women: Becoming," ties to the 1991 Women of the ELCA emphasis which will lift up God's ongoing process of the wholeness of creation. A consultant for LWT's "Earthcare" column, Mary Schramm manages St. Martin's Table in Minneapolis, a peace education center and bookstore/restaurant. Mary and her husband John, are well known for their concern for peace with justice and are noted authors and presenters on those issues.

The information and perspectives shared by these featured speakers will inspire hearers to a new sense of purpose and mission as we "Celebrate God's Creation" in that time and place.

Judy Giff
Convention Manager

PRAYER WALL

For those not able to be present in Anaheim there are many ways to connect to the gathering. One way is to send prayers which will be written on the Prayer Wall. Use a 3" x 5" index card or small postcard and send your prayers to Women of the ELCA "Prayer Wall," 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631. Please send your prayer cards before June 25, 1990.

POLICY ON LECTIONEERING and the 1990 Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention

CAUSE Women of the ELCA be-
lieves strongly in affirming each in-
dividual woman, and

CAUSE Women of the ELCA
wishes to give all women equal op-
portunity for involvement in the or-
ganization at the churchwide level,

HEREFORE any wearing of pro-
positional buttons or slogans, the dis-
tribution of materials, or the carry-
ing of placards to promote one
candidate over another is not per-
mitted prior to, and during, the 1990
Triennial Convention.

Multicultural Leadership Event

Women of the Evangelical Luther-
an Church in America is planning
a multicultural leadership gather-
ing. This event will affirm the lead-
ership skills of women of color who
over the years contributed their
gifts to the Women of the ELCA
and predecessor organizations. It
will also invite younger women of
color interested in sharing their
gifts.

The multicultural leadership
gathering will also provide oppor-
tunities for women of color to share
and promote among themselves
the cultural gifts that they bring
from their various ethnic commu-
nities. Watch for further informa-
tion about the event in Women of
the ELCA publications.

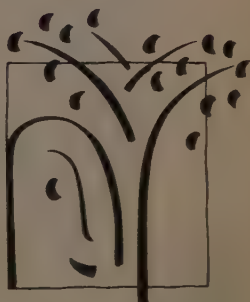
Mail form below to:

**Triennial Convention Manager
Women of the ELCA
8765 W. Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631**

**The First Triennial Convention
of Women of the ELCA
July 12-July 15, 1990
Anaheim, California**

☐ **PLEASE** send convention registration
information to:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ ZIP _____



**CELEBRATE
GOD'S
CREATION**

Celebrate God's Creation:

An Agape Meal

Sue Edison-Swift

[The purpose of this agape meal is to create a time together to share and build community. Those gathered should be sitting in small circles of three to seven people.]

Welcome, Instructions, Opening Hymn

Table prayer (all):

Creator God, we praise you for your handiwork, and ask your continued blessing on all of your creation. Look upon our brokenness, and send us your healing. Pour out your spirit among us and join us together in love and faith. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



Distribution of Food

◆ One person from each circle goes to the common table to pick up the first part of the meal: fruit. As each person around the circle serves her neighbor she says (from Genesis 1:31): "*And God saw everything God had made and God said it was very good.*" After being served each neighbor responds with "*Thank you, Creator God.*"

◆ After eating the fruit, each person around the circle completes this statement: "*I feel the nearness of God in creation when I . . .*" (For example, "When I plow for the first time in spring," or "When I walk down a big city street," or "When I see a brilliant sunset.") The group should not comment or ask questions until each person speaks.

◆ Another from the circle goes to the common table and returns with a loaf of bread. As each breaks off a portion for her neighbor she says, *"Jesus Christ is the bread of life."* After being served, each person responds with, *"Sustaining God, give us today our daily bread."* The group does not eat the bread at this time.

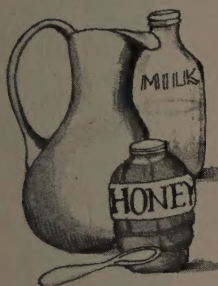


◆ After all are served, each person completes this statement: *"At this time in my life, I need to be sustained in life and faith through*

... (some responses might include "through friendship," "through regular church attendance," or "through new employment").

◆ A third person goes to the table and brings back milk and a bowl of honey. As the milk is being poured the server says (from 1 Peter 2:2): *"Like babes we long for spiritual milk."* As each person dips her bread into the honey she responds (from Psalm 119:103): *"The Word is sweeter than honey to my mouth."*

◆ The statement for each to complete at this time is *"I am most grateful to God for the blessing of. . . ."*



Closing Prayer

One person in the circle begins the prayer by saying *"Most merciful God, we are your own, we give you but your own. Hear our prayers and join our hearts as one."* Each person around the circle adds her petition, a prayer concerning something of importance to her. After each prayer, the group responds *"Hear the prayers of your created people, O Lord."* After all have spoken, the prayer leader closes with the words *"We praise your holy name and pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."*

The Lord's Prayer (all)

Share the Peace

Permission is given to reproduce this agape meal. Please include the line *"Used with permission from the May 1990 Lutheran Woman Today, © Augsburg Fortress."*



HI HOPES, pictured here, is a musical group of autistic savants who will be performing at the Women of the ELCA First Triennial Convention in Anaheim, California.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.—Romans 12:6

Hope University—UNICO National College, Anaheim, California, is the only fine arts college in the world set up specifically for the gifted mentally retarded. Its student body of 38 is made up of persons with retardation who have special gifts in music, art, dance, or drama.

As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.—1 Peter 4:10

Each member of HI HOPES has a story of barriers and growth, struggle and accomplishment. The incredible range of savant abilities in the group affirms God's varied grace. HI HOPES testifies to the miracle of what can happen when we bring our gifts together.

Lord, each of us is a unique individual with gifts you have chosen especially for us. Help us to be good stewards of your grace, and to share our abilities and talents with others. Amen.

—CJL

LWT Honor Roll

Special Convention Issue

Congratulations to these Honor Roll congregations:

Landia; Beltrami, Minnesota
 West; Homestead, Montana
 Odhue; Florence, South Dakota
 Rock Creek; Osage, Iowa
 English; Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

Honor Roll congregations are those in which all women in the parish subscribe to LWT. To apply for honor roll status, write:

LWT Promotion
 Box 1209
 Minneapolis, MN 55440
 Attn.: Anita Oachs

Most of the articles in this LWT are offered to help individuals, women's groups and congregations share in the spirit of Women of the ELCA's First Triennial Convention, support women of the church and "Celebrate God's Creation." Woven throughout the issue are suggestions for local use and opportunities for those not attending in Anaheim to connect with the gathering. ■

Coming Up

LUTHERAN
WOMAN
TODAY

Lutheran Woman Today continues its 1990 emphasis on the "Integrity of Creation" with upcoming issues on "The Good Earth" (June), "Peace with Justice" (July/August), "Rhythms of Life" (September), "Healing" (October), "Home-Making" (November) and "Celebrating God's Creation: The Future" (December).

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Individual subscriptions at \$8.00 (regular or big print) may be sent to:

Lutheran Woman Today Circulation

426 South 5th Street, Box 1209
 Minneapolis, MN 55440

(Group subscriptions may be available in your congregation.)

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"Celebrate God's Creation," theme of the Women of the ELCA First Triennial Convention, will weave throughout four days (July 12-15, 1990) in Anaheim, California. One reflection of the theme is the commemorative plate shown here, part of the convention's "Fare Share" event (see page 28).

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